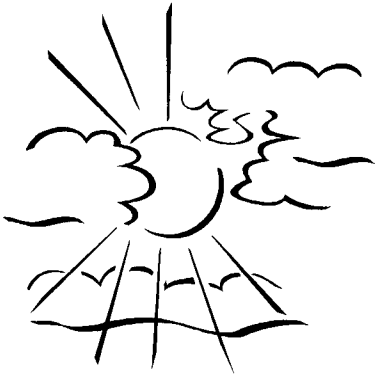


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Wednesday, June 29, 2005

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TOPIC	PAGE
Budget	2-3
*Health Care	4-9
*Child Abuse/Neglect	10-19
Juvenile Justice	20-21
Domestic Violence	22-25
*Foster Care	26-31
Elder Care	32-33
Child Support	34
Employment/Unemployment	35
State Government	36

Wednesday, June 29, 2005
The Detroit News

GOP House budget hurts the poor

By Rep. Chris Kolb and Marianne Udow

During the past few weeks, there has been a lot of rhetoric and misinformation about Michigan's welfare system and the families we serve through the Department of Human Services during the budget debate. It is time to set the record straight.

The Michigan House of Representatives has approved an ill-conceived omnibus budget bill that would have a devastating impact on many Michigan families. The House prefers to protect corporate tax loopholes over Michigan families.

It is important to understand the depth and breadth of the impacts not just for the adults we serve but for thousands of children as well. The cuts to human services will have a dramatic effect not just on poor families but on the quality of life of all citizens in Michigan.

There is no argument that those who can support themselves and become self sufficient should. Public tax dollars should never be used to support able-bodied adults who can function independent of state support.

But the cuts offered by the Legislature will eliminate benefits to some of our most fragile families. These families, often struggling with mental illness and chronic health problems, rely on state programs to provide necessary support for food, clothing and shelter. If passed, the House bill would eliminate the social safety net for thousands of these families.

The House would end cash assistance support for 48,000 Michiganians, including 36,000 children, simply because they have needed this support for a total of four years. These are our most fragile families. Many are already working but in such low wage jobs that they are still below the poverty level. Others are dealing with devastating health issues or disabilities, or caring for a disabled family member. Over half are functionally illiterate.

Eliminating cash assistance for those families most in need will leave our children hungry, less able to learn and many will end up in foster care when their parents can no longer afford clothing or basic shelter.

The House would also cut assistance levels by more than \$500 for those vulnerable families. Our cash assistance levels in Michigan have not been increased for 15 years. For a family of three, cash assistance provides \$5,500 per year -- an income that is 65 percent below the poverty level. No one is getting rich on the assistance payments we make now. Reducing the rates for our poorest citizens is short-sighted and unconscionable.

The House would cut child care an additional \$38 million. Payment levels will be so low our children will be put at risk of being left in unsafe situations so parents can go to work. Or, in some cases, parents will no longer be able to go to work because child care will become unavailable or unaffordable. Forty-three thousand children in our state will bear the brunt and suffer as a result of these cuts.

The House cuts would further reduce the number of workers who provide child abuse services and adult protective services, food stamps, emergency financial and other help to those who cannot otherwise meet their basic needs. These public servants work tirelessly despite the fact that many of them carry unmanageable caseloads of from 250 to 400; a 38 percent increase in caseloads over the past five years.

Despite the critical role they play in the safety and stability of our communities, the House bill would force cuts of an additional 700 department staff. This is a recipe for a disaster.

Not only does the House budget fail to reflect the values of our state, it is not fiscally smart. In the budget proposed by the House, \$97 million in federal dollars will be returned to Washington to save \$79 million in state funds.

In addition, state costs will actually increase in other areas as basic support services are denied. For example, a family of four gets cash assistance of \$6,600 per year. If we take that assistance away, leaving the parent unable to provide even the most basic living standard for their children, these children may well end up in the foster care system. The cost of caring for three children in the foster care system is \$19,000 per year per child -- a much less humane and more costly alternative to cash assistance for their families.

The House budget does not reflect the community in which Michigan citizens want to live. We want our children to be cared for and poor families helped -- not thrown on the streets. We need to focus on providing these families with the skills and resources to become as self-sufficient as possible instead of ending their assistance forever.

What can be done instead? Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proposed a budget that makes tough choices and is balanced but maintains compassion and support for the most vulnerable. In contrast to the House, Granholm has proposed a budget that closes corporate tax loopholes instead of balancing the budget on the backs of the poor.

It is the right thing to do

State Rep. Chris Kolb is a Democrat representing Ann Arbor. Marianne Udow is director of the the Michigan Department of Human Services. Fax letters to (313) 222-6417 and e-mail them to letters@detnews.com.

Jun 28, 10:35 PM EDT

Medicaid Told to Do More to Stop Fraud

By KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The agency that oversees the nation's \$261 billion health insurance program for the poor places too little emphasis on helping states prevent waste and fraud, government investigators and some lawmakers said Tuesday.

States are primarily responsible for ensuring that Medicaid providers bill the program for legitimate services. Yet the federal government, through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, should do more to help, said Leslie Aronovitz, director of health care for the Government Accountability Office.

"States need information about what's going on in other states," Aronovitz said. "They need to know that CMS will have a continued and major commitment to helping the states. We don't think that commitment to fraud and abuse control, in terms of helping the states, is there."

The agency said it believed the GAO's review was too narrow in scope and said it failed to cite other programs in which the agency has made improvements to curb waste and fraud.

For example, the agency said it has halted accounting practices that 26 states were using to artificially inflate the amount of federal dollars flowing to their Medicaid programs. The agency said it's also making greater use of technology to find fraudulent claims in Medicare and Medicaid, saving the states and the federal government \$200 million in recent years.

Congress is expected to take action later this year to trim Medicaid's growth by \$10 billion over the next five years. President Bush had called for a \$20 billion reduction.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said he believed government investigators did not give the Medicaid agency enough credit. But Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., agreed with Aronovitz's assessment.

"The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services essentially moves when the horse is out of the barn, essentially after you've had yet another example of a program getting ripped off," Wyden said. "What I want to see is a much more strategic approach to rooting out this fraud than such a reactive approach."

Aronovitz noted that the agency has only eight full-time employees dedicated to overseeing states' anti-fraud efforts. As a result, the agency makes just seven or eight onsite visits each year to track state monitoring.

The House last week rejected a Bush administration proposal to give the agency an extra \$80 million for anti-fraud activities. Of that amount, \$75 million would have gone to helping monitor the new prescription drug benefit and \$5 million was to be spent on preventing fraud in Medicaid. "We understand the two houses of Congress hold different positions on that money," said agency spokeswoman Mary Kahn. "We hope something will be worked out in conference."

James Moorman, president and CEO of Taxpayers against Fraud, said lawsuits filed by whistle-blowers are an important weapon in fighting Medicaid fraud. Whistle-blowers are eligible to receive between 15 percent and 30 percent of the federal government's recoveries in such lawsuits.

He said states should be required to enact similar legislation as a condition of getting matching Medicaid dollars. That way, whistle-blowers could get access to the state dollars that are recovered through the lawsuits.

In a second report released at the hearing Tuesday, the GAO faulted some states' use of consultants to try to get more Medicaid money from the federal government.

As of 2004, 34 states used consultants to maximize Medicaid reimbursements - up from 10 states just a couple years earlier.

"A lack of oversight and clear guidance by CMS has allowed states to develop new financing methods or continue existing ones that take advantage of ambiguity and generate considerable additional federal costs," the report said.

Save Medicaid from any more cuts

Spencer Johnson, John MacKeigan, M.D. and Lewin Wyatt, Jr., D.O., Midland Daily News

06/26/2005

The next Michigan child or elderly citizen you see could very well be the face of the state's Medicaid health care program.

The face of Medicaid today is, by and large, our grandmothers and grandfathers. Elderly and disabled Michigan residents account for 70 percent of total Medicaid health care spending, mostly for long-term care and prescription drugs.

In terms of total patients served, the face of Medicaid today is mostly children and their moms. Medicaid finances more than 33 of every 100 births in Michigan. Many of these babies would not be alive today without Michigan's Medicaid health care program.

The face of Medicaid in Michigan is tens of thousands of former auto and manufacturing workers. Most lost good jobs with good benefits and today are unemployed or have new jobs without health care coverage. Medicaid today provides health care to a record – and still growing – 1.42 million Michigan citizens. In other words, Medicaid is now the health care program for one of every seven Michiganders.

In addition to the obvious human benefits, Medicaid health care services are far less expensive than other health care programs. As a value to Michigan taxpayers, the state's Medicaid program:

- Helps to generate health care jobs. Michigan's health care sector is already the state's single largest employer, providing more than 424,500 direct jobs and 233,500 indirect jobs that pump \$25.4 billion a year in wages and salaries into the economy. Health care is projected to generate more than 100,000 new jobs in Michigan in the next decade, as the state's population lives longer and needs more health care services. According to a new study by Michigan State University researchers, a \$100 million cut in Medicaid spending would result in more than 6,300 Michigan residents losing their jobs
- Ranked sixth lowest among the seven Great Lakes states at \$5,500 in costs per Medicaid patient. The lowest cost state was Illinois at \$5,100 per patient, and the highest was Minnesota at \$7,500. Ranked 30th lowest among the 50 states in expenditures per resident. Michigan spent about \$735 per resident on Medicaid. The lowest cost state was Nevada at \$350 per resident, and the highest was New York at more than \$1,900.
- Is cost-effective compared to other health care programs. In 2004, Michigan Medicaid spending increased only 1.5 percent per patient. By comparison, Medicare spending was up 7.1 percent, and private health care insurance rates averaged increases of 12.6 percent.
- Reduces Michigan's status as a "donor state" (a state that sends more tax dollars to Washington than it receives back in federal funding). For every \$1 Michigan spends on Medicaid, the federal government sends Michigan an additional \$1.31.

For all of those reasons, the Partnership for Michigan's Health, which includes the state's hospitals and physicians, strongly opposes additional Medicaid cuts in the 2006 state budget. Medicaid has been slashed by more than \$540 million since 1998 – including nearly \$40 million in reductions in the Executive Order approved by the Governor and Legislature on March 23. To make matters worse, for the 2006 budget, the Governor is proposing more than \$125 million in additional Medicaid cuts, and, alarmingly, certain legislators are advocating even deeper reductions. Medicaid is already under-funded by more than \$1 billion, even as caseloads continue to skyrocket to new record levels almost every day.

State government must commit, over the long-term, to paying its fair share for health care to protect children and the elderly, to protect thousands of good jobs, and to keep employer health care costs in check. Short-term emergency funding mechanisms, such as temporary taxes on hospitals, nursing home beds and now physician practices to leverage federal funding, must be replaced by stable, long-term funding sources. More

cuts to Medicaid will eliminate Michigan jobs, reduce federal funding to Michigan, and cause real human suffering to thousands of our state's most vulnerable children, elderly and disabled residents. We invite you to join with us in urging our state lawmakers to avoid additional Medicaid cuts in the 2006 state budget.

Spencer Johnson is President of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association. John M. MacKeigan, M.D., is President of the Michigan State Medical Society. Lewin Wyatt, Jr., D.O., is President of the Michigan Osteopathic Association.

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Maternal, child health falling short

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

By Brian Wheeler bwheeler@citpat.com -- 768-4928

Fewer Jackson teens are giving birth, yet the community is facing growing problems in terms of mothers who haven't finished high school and receive little care during pregnancy.

A report called Right Start in Michigan 2005 and released today found Jackson lagged behind averages for Michigan's 59 largest cities in eight areas that track maternal and child health.

Despite some improvements, the study found growing numbers of children born to city residents suffered from low birthweight or were born pre-term. More children also were being born to unwed mothers.

The report -- released by the Lansing-based advocacy group, Michigan League for Human Services -- used birth certificate records from 1994-96 and 2001-03 to assess the risks of mothers and their newborns according to race, ethnicity and hometown.

The report is intended to emphasize the need for aid and programs for poor pregnant women.

"The circumstances and conditions under which a baby is born have lifelong implications," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, senior research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services.

Jackson has long fared poorly on such surveys, and this year was no different. The teen birth rate placed Jackson 56th among the 59 cities, while the rate of mothers seeking late or no prenatal care ranked 57th.

Child- and maternal-health advocates have tried various responses.

A task force has studied the community's infant-mortality rate, while the Health Department and others have tried to expand offerings to curb the area's high number of teen pregnancies.

On the latter count, advocates can be cheered by Jackson's progress. Some 18.6 percent of births from 2001-03 were to teens, down from 21.4 percent from 1994-96. Still, the average for the 59 cities fell from 12.5 percent to 9.8 percent.

Becky Mehall, service learning coordinator for Jackson Public Schools, said the district feels pressure from parents and internally to develop programs that address teen pregnancy.

"Even though (the rate is) going down, we do remain above the state average," Mehall said, "and that is a concern."

The state is not doing well, either.

Michigan's infant mortality rate ranked 38th in the nation, according to 2001 data. That means an infant is more likely to live through his or her first birthday in 37 other states, Zehnder-Merrell said. The state's ranking has hovered between 36 and 39 since 1996, she said.

In Michigan, eight infants per 1,000 died before their first birthday between 2000-02, Zehnder-Merrell said.

"Other states have made progress, but we've kept the same rate," she said Monday.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Detroit Free Press

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

Letter

Michigan needs public health insurance plan

All taxes are not equal. The proposal by the Granholm administration to tax physicians falls into the category of being among the most inequitable.

However, rather than debating this issue, I would suggest both the administration and our legislators would better serve all the citizens of Michigan by addressing a more fundamental one: who is responsible for paying for health care. The Michigan Constitution declares that "the public health and general welfare of the people of the State ... are matters of primary concern." Further, the Legislature is directed to pass "suitable laws" for the "protection and promotion of the public health." (Article 4, Section 51)

For almost 60 years, presidents and congressional leaders have talked about national health care. A wide variety of proposals have been floated, proposed, recommended and then rejected. To this day, there is no will in Washington to seriously engage on this topic. And by seriously, I mean actually enacting a plan into law.

So what should we do here in Michigan? Our Medicaid plan is in tatters, the auto firms are determined to cut their health care expenses, the courts have recently allowed a major air carrier to shed itself of benefits to retirees (do you think the autos might be listening?), our uninsured numbers are increasing as our manufacturing base shrinks and our unemployment rate leads the nation.

It is time for Michigan to act. If health care is a right, then isn't it about time we set about establishing a system to pay for it? Surely, we can develop a number of proposals that would address the methods of paying for the services as well as basis for their provision. Certainly, we must act quickly if we are to avoid a major disaster for our health care providers and their patients. But let us avoid shortcuts like a physician tax to put yet another bandage on a badly injured patient -- Michigan's health care system.

Federico G. Mariona, M.D.

President

Wayne County Medical Society of Southeast Michigan

Detroit

REPORT NO. --, VOLUME 35

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2005

PANEL REPORTS STUDENT PROTECTION BILLS

Sex offenders would be limited in their forays into the 1,000-foot zones around schools, but they would not be entirely prohibited from those student safety zones under legislation reported unanimously from the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The main bill, as reported (SB 129), would prohibit registered sex offenders from moving into a safety zone or from seeking permanent employment within the zone, but allows those who are already living or working in a zone to remain. But a court could require that they not initiate contact with minors while at home or at work.

The bill also would allow those whose jobs could occasionally take them into safety zones to continue with that work, again with the potential order that they not make contact with minors while working.

The bill, reported with little discussion, also further restricts the definition of school property to those areas where instruction is provided or sporting events occur, eliminating potential safety zones around administration buildings or closed schools.

Sen. Liz Brater raised the only objections on any of the bills in the package, voting "present" on SB 608, as well as on an amendment that would allow commission of, not conviction on, a prior act of child molestation to be admitted as evidence of character. Ms. Brater argued that the committee should not act on the amendment without input from the defense bar.

Committee chair and bill sponsor Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt) and Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning both said the provision required the prosecutor to prove to the judge that the act happened, that it was similar to the act being charged and that its admission would not be overly prejudicial to the defendant.

Mr. Dunning said the language, which mirrors but is more strict than federal court rules, was needed to show a pattern of behavior where some of the children involved either cannot testify or have grown beyond the statute of limitations for the acts against them.

The remaining bills in the package (SB 605, SB 606, SB 607) make it a crime for those required to register as a sex offender to fail to provide keep their information current. Those bills were reported unanimously.

HOUSE JUDICIARY: Although they acknowledged problems with the Sex Offender Registry, members of a House committee approved bills that toughen sentences and bar certain employment for people on that list.

The House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved seven bills Tuesday that lay out penalties for failing to report sex offender registration and banning employment from day care and child care centers if an individual is on the registry.

But committee chair Rep. William Van Regenmorter (R-Jenison) said he is aware of the problems with Michigan's registry and plans to work on legislation to fix it in the future. Several representatives from both parties agreed with him.

"The sex offender registry has a lot of problems," said Rep. Alexander Lipsey (D-Kalamazoo). "Making bills dependent on the registry is problematic."

The committee took testimony on the bills last week and voted this week. The first to go was HB 4936, which requires the Department of Human Services to conduct a background check on anyone applying for a day care or childcare license. If an applicant is on the sex offender registry, he or she would not be allowed to work at a day care. In addition, an existing day care or childcare center would have to conduct a criminal history check on all employees, and licenses would not be renewed for anyone on the registry.

Supporters of that bill and all of the others included the State Police and the Michigan Catholic Conference. The Department of Corrections and Department of Human Services said they were neutral on the bills but agreed with the intent.

Also approved was HB 4958, which would charge anyone failing to report a crime to his or her day care center of employment with a two-year "public safety" felony. The bill is tie barred to HB 4936.

Rep. Rick Baxter (R-Hanover), who sponsored HB 4936, said the bill writers did not want to pick and choose who would be affected and said it was easier to use the current system. However, he admitted that system needs work and would be willing to work on any legislation in that vein.

Department of Corrections officials said they were specifically neutral on HB 4958 and HB 4957, which punishes those who accept employment in a day care while on the registry or conceal the fact they are on the registry. Both would be "public safety" felonies and be punishable by two years or four years in prison, respectively.

"We don't take positions because we don't know their impact yet," said Russ Marlan, Corrections spokesperson. "But we're supportive of the ideas."

Mr. Marlan said the bills go beyond the punishments overseen by his department, but agreed the bills are a little overlapping with the plethora of punishments already handed down by the DOC.

Also, the committee approved SB 130, which passed the Senate 38-0 and would require anyone who wishes to coach an independent youth league sport to disclose any convictions of a sexual or alcohol/drug nature. A House amendment to the bill stated that anyone on the registry could not work as a coach or volunteer for a team, day care center or playground. The committee also unanimously approved the amendment.

Sen. Alan Sanborn (R-Richmond), who sponsored the bill, said he liked his bill as written and hoped his supporters would still support the bill with the House amendment added to it. But he was not opposed to the amendment and said protecting children is a top priority and having moral leaders in their lives is important.

HB 4934 raises the penalty for anyone on the registry who fails to report to police four times a year and requires anyone who vacates a residence to report they have done so within 10 days. Failure to do either

would be a one-year misdemeanor for the first offense and a 4-year felony for subsequent violations or a fine of up to \$2,500. HB 4935 classifies the latter offense as a “public safety” felony.

Finally, the committee approved a bill (HB 4937) that allows prior convictions for sex offenses to be used in court for anyone accused of a sex offense.

All seven bills are part of the Student Safety Initiative, which encompasses 14 bills in all that deal with keeping registered sex offenders away from schools, regardless of the type of crime or how long ago it was committed. The seven Judiciary Committee bills deal with non-school settings; the House Education Committee is looking at the other seven that deal with school settings. The bills are a response to a letter from Governor Jennifer Granholm asking the Legislature to devise ways to keep kids safe from sexual predators.

SIMILAR BILLS PASS SENATE COMMITTEE: Also on Tuesday, the Senate Families and Human Services Committee approved three bills nearly identical to the House bills above.

SB 613 would set guidelines to punish childcare employees who do not report certain felony charges, while SB 614 requires day care centers to run background checks on new and current employees. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Bev Hammerstrom (R-Temperance) also states day care employees must report to their employer if they are charged with a misdemeanor or felony listed in the School Code.

Currently, day care employees are not required to report convictions, nor are background checks required, although many centers already run the checks. Both checks – FBI and Michigan – would run \$54, and Ms. Hammerstrom said she is looking at a way to fund that cost.

If the checks reveal the individual has been convicted of a sex offense, they would either not have their license renewed or not be able to work at the day care. Also, failing to report charges would result in one year in jail or \$1,000 if the crime was a misdemeanor or 2 years in prison or \$2,000 in fines if the crime was a felony.

SB 614 is tie-barred to SB 615, which requires the Department of Human Services to request a background check on anyone requesting a new or renewal day care license. The FBI would forward their information to the State Police, who would conduct the checks and charge a reasonable fee for doing so.

“I do believe there’s a very compelling need for this,” said Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood), committee chair and sponsor of SB 615.

Sex Offender Bill Narrowed

Substitutes for a package of Senate bills designed to keep sexual predators away from schools moved out of the Senate Judiciary Committee this afternoon.

The original version of SB 0129 required all of those on the sex offender registry, including a 17-year-old who had consensual sex with a 15-year-old girlfriend, to stay out of school zones. Last week, several concerned mothers testified against the bill, claiming the bill was too broad. Opponents also complained about the legislation's failure to define loitering.

After the public input, the SB 0129 substitute includes the following changes:

-- School property is now defined as "real property." However, a shuttered school owned by the district no longer falls into a school zone.

-- The bill no longer requires minors convicted of a listed offense who are living with their parents in a school safety zone to leave the home. The minor is also allowed to continue going to school, a liberty the original bill excluded.

-- Anyone with a convicted listed offense who had a job or lived in the school zone before legislation passed will be allowed to continue working or living in the area. Depending on the type of conviction, these people may be ordered not to have any contact with minors. A person convicted of an offense may reasonably and sporadically move through the school zone.

-- Loitering is defined to include people remaining in a school zone for a period of time with the intent of observing or contacting minors.

-- The bill includes four classes of offenses that do not fall under the restrictions. A 17-year-old who had voluntary, non-violent sex with a 15-year-old will no longer fall under the restrictions.

SB 0129, SB 0605, SB 0606, SB 0607 and SB 0608 moved to the Senate floor.

Child Safety

Predator-free zones must get protections right

June 29, 2005

Detroit Free Press

Parents who send their children off to school or day care ought to have more assurance than Michigan now offers that their little ones are safe from sexual predators.

The Legislature is trying to address this situation in a series of bills that, among other things, would make the screening more stringent for people who work or want to work with or around children.

A total of 14 bills are moving through the House and Senate. That's the good news. The bad news is that the package includes some overly broad ideas that take the focus from protecting children to possibly infringing on the rights of convicted sex offenders who have paid their debts to society.

The main issue is the creation of "Predator Free Zones" within 1,000 feet of schools. Anyone listed on the state's controversial registry of sex offenders would be barred from living or working within the zone.

The Legislature has begun to modify the very broad provisions originally proposed, so that only first-degree sex offenders ineligible for a sentence of probation would be barred from the school zones. Otherwise, the bills do not take into account that not every convicted sex offender on the list is a predator or pedophile. The list includes people convicted of nonpredatory offenses and teenagers who engaged in sex with underage partners unaware that they were breaking the law. Michigan has been remiss in not doing more to ensure that children entrusted to schools and day care centers are not being exposed to predators. But lawmakers need to make sure that the bills are properly focused and do not use too broad a brush that could draw a legal challenge. This well-intentioned legislation serves no one if it's tied up in court for years.

The end goal here should be solid and defensible laws to better protect Michigan's children.

Clare County man arrested on sex charges

**Kelly Nankervis,
Midland Daily News
06/28/2005**

A 47-year-old man was arrested Monday in Clare County on charges including eavesdropping and child sexually abusive activity after a two-year investigation.

The Clare County Sheriff's Office reported the investigation began in June 2003 when two victims found videotapes in the garage of Michael David Hein's Harrison home. The victims played the unlabeled tapes and found they had been recorded while the girls were showering in the bathroom of a home Hein lived in while he was in St. Charles.

At the time the recordings were made, the victims – who are related to Hein – were 14 and 15 years old.

Also in 2003, a search warrant was conducted at Hein's Harrison home, and his computer and camera system were seized. The Michigan State Police Computer Crimes Unit checked the computer and found numerous child pornography sites.

Hein was arrested for two counts of eavesdropping by installing and using a device and one count of manufacture or possession of an eavesdropping device. The warrant for those charges was issued by the Saginaw County Prosecutors Office last week.

The other charges – five counts of child sexually abusive activity – were issued in an arrest warrant by the Clare County Prosecutors Office on Monday. The charges relate to the possession of child pornography, said Clare County Prosecutor Norm Gage.

Hein was arraigned on the five counts of child sexually abusive activity in the Clare County District Court and bond was set at \$50,000 cash or surety. He has not yet been arraigned on the eavesdropping charges out of Saginaw County.

He previously was convicted of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, involving a 9-year-old family member, in Midland County in 1987.

Ex-band director sentenced

9-months in jail for stalking more than prosecutors expected.

PUBLISHED: June 29, 2005

By Chad Halcom
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

It was a showdown of anger, pain, contrition and vindication Tuesday in Macomb County Circuit Court when a former band director and educator learned he'd spend the equivalent of a full school year in jail for improper conduct with students.

John Philip Moore of Sterling Heights received nine months in the Macomb County Jail with more than four years of probation to follow at his sentencing on two counts of stalking before Circuit Judge Mary A. Chrzanowski.

"He deceived his wife just like he deceived and manipulated these victims," Chrzanowski told Moore and the courtroom at his sentencing. "This man is a manipulator, I'm sorry. And it appalls me that the most I can possibly give him is one year in jail under this resolution. It just appalls me."

Chrzanowski's sense of revulsion caused a brief hitch in the court proceedings as she informed the defense Tuesday she was inclined to give Moore the maximum of one year in jail after reading pre-sentence reports and other material. With Moore's relatively clean background, officials said, both prosecution and defense expected either probation or a nominal jail stay.

"In 33 years of teaching, I've probably taught over 10,000 students. I've gotten some into drug treatment, some for counseling, given some a place to stay when there was trouble at home, and helped some out with tuition or getting to college," Moore said in his defense at sentencing. "This is the worst thing I've ever done. And I'll suffer for it until the day I die." Moore, 55, a former band director at Cousino High School in Warren, retired in December as school district administrators were initiating proceedings to terminate him. He has faced charges of stalking two students at the school and sexually touching one of them.

"He was a very popular teacher at the school, and we really took a hit for

coming out and bringing this to light," said Valerie, a mother of one of the victims in the case who is not being identified by her full name to protect the victim's identity. "There were comments like the girls were whores and they asked for it and all of that."

Moore had also worked for Madison Public Schools in Madison Heights. Raymond Correll, a defense attorney representing Moore in the case, left court without comment Tuesday and did not return phone calls after the sentencing.

Valerie and Karen, another mother of a student in the case, said the families have been grateful for support services offered by the prosecutors and victim advocates, and said not knowing such services were available caused their daughters to delay reporting Moore's behavior.

Moore faced charges of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, attempted fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct and a stalking charge, plus a separate stalking charge in 37th District Court in Warren involving another girl.

A key legal element of the sexual misconduct case is that the teen accuser was over the age of consent at the time of the alleged offenses last June, but she was still a student at the school where Moore taught and therefore his role as an authority figure makes the behavior criminal.

"We're very pleased with the outcome," said William Dailey, a Macomb County assistant prosecutor handling the case. "The judge sent a clear message about people in positions of authority not to abuse that trust."

In May, Moore pleaded no contest to two counts of stalking, a 1-year misdemeanor, to resolve all the charges. Moore was married at the time he allegedly had a consensual sexual relationship with an 18-year-old girl who had been one of his band students. He allegedly began pursuing her late last year when she no longer wanted to see him, giving rise to the stalking case.

The CSC case involved another girl who was 16 or 17 years old and a student under his authority when he allegedly touched or fondled her last year.

In letters to the media, a few of the director's former students have described him as an excellent educator who inspired students while building a strong band program at Cousino.

Because he pleaded to stalking rather than a sex crime, he will not have to register as a sex offender. The plea deal also spared both of Moore's accusers from having to testify against him.

"We knew that would happen. They did advise us about that," Karen said about the charge reduction that spares Moore from registering as a sex offender. "But we also understood that to keep them from testifying some kind of sacrifice would have to be made, and that was it."

As part of Moore's probation following his release, Chrzanowski ordered that he have no contact with minors or visit school property.

Severe terms in scalding Man gets 6-15 years for burning boy, 7, in tub of water

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

BY ART AISNER News Staff Reporter

"At least I can deal with adults that afflict pain on each other ... but the pain you inflicted on this young boy is almost beyond my comprehension," Circuit Judge Donald Shelton told Byron McFarlin before sentencing him to 6-15 years in prison Tuesday.

The punishment was the most severe Shelton could impose under the state's sentencing guidelines, which he agreed not to exceed when McFarlin pleaded no contest to one count of first-degree child abuse last month. Yet he appeared reluctant to meet the agreement Tuesday, calling the crime an example of excessive brutality and said he likely would have exceeded sentencing guidelines had McFarlin forced a trial.

"You should not think that lessens at all my repugnance about what happened here," Shelton said of his decision to stick to the top of the guidelines. "He'll likely recover from his injuries, but this boy's never going to recover from the psychological damage you inflicted."

McFarlin, 40, placed the boy in a tub full of scalding water in the Ypsilanti Township apartment he shared with Stephanie Williams, the boy's mother, on Jan. 10 as a punishment for breaking a household rule. The boy suffered third-degree burns to his feet and legs and was hospitalized for a month because of the injuries and subsequent infections that developed because he was denied medical treatment and forced to stay in a closet, often without food or water, police said.

Williams, who is scheduled to stand trial in September on two counts of second-degree child abuse stemming from the incident, called police to get medical attention about two weeks later.

A separate trial to determine her parental rights is scheduled for November.

McFarlin stood silently throughout the hearing, occasionally nodding his head and turning to talk to his attorney John Toomey while Shelton spoke. He declined the opportunity to address the court prior to sentencing but did send a letter to Shelton, details of which were not revealed.

Toomey argued that McFarlin's use of crack cocaine contributed to his actions that day, and that the severity of the boy's injuries were magnified by faulty plumbing that exceeded water-temperature regulations.

Assistant Washtenaw County Prosecutor Paul Barnett said McFarlin's actions and denial of medical care were very disturbing and worthy of severe punishment.

"If any case deserves the top of the guidelines, this one does," he said.

Williams, 34, is living in the area with her father and is in counseling, her attorney Gregory Dodd said. She is barred from visiting her son and two other children, including an infant fathered by McFarlin, while the parental rights case is pending.

All three children are living with relatives.

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Jun 29, 9:34 AM EDT

Convicted child killer McRae dies in Jackson prison

JACKSON, Mich. (AP) -- A 70-year-old man convicted of killing two boys decades ago and sentenced two weeks ago in one of the cases has died in prison, the Michigan Department of Corrections said. Prison officials found John R. McRae on Tuesday morning in his individual cell at the Southern Michigan Correctional Facility in Jackson, Corrections spokesman Russ Marlan said. He was unresponsive and when medical teams arrived they determined he was dead. Medical officials said it appeared McRae died of natural causes, Marlan said. He said Wednesday morning that he had not yet received the incident report from the prison.

A message was left Wednesday for McRae's lawyer.

McRae was sentenced June 15 to life in prison without parole for the murder of 15-year-old Randy Laufer of Harrison. The teenager was bound, molested and stabbed to death in 1987.

Laufer's remains were found in 1997 buried a few yards from the Clare County mobile home McRae lived in when Laufer went missing.

He originally was convicted in 1998 of killing the boy, but the state Supreme Court overturned the conviction, ruling that McRae was denied a lawyer when he confessed.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the ruling in January and when prosecutors tried him again in the spring, they did it without his confession.

When McRae was 16, he was convicted of first-degree murder in the 1950 killing of 8-year-old Joey Housey of St. Clair Shores.

McRae served two decades in prison before then-Gov. William Milliken commuted his life sentence in 1971 at the recommendation of the state parole board.

Clare County prosecutor Norm Gage told the Morning Sun of Mount Pleasant that he was happy for the two families that McRae was sentenced before his health failed.

McRae's lawyer had been planning to appeal the conviction, the paper reported.

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

Letter

Abused children need properly funded programs

In reference to The News' articles on the state of juvenile justice in Wayne County, the plight of children, youth and families in this system has been negatively impacted since its inception in 1999 ("Juvenile system under fire," June 12).

While the initial premise of the system was laudable -- increased use of community, family-based care and less of a reliance on automatic out-of-home placements -- the promise of such a system never got off the ground because almost immediately the county began taking these cost savings out of the budget rather than reinvesting them in prevention and community-based alternatives.

What once was heralded as a national model was doomed from the beginning because of a failure to adequately offer a full continuum of care and moving dollars saved out of the system rather than reinvesting them. The result was reminiscent of mental health "reform" in the 1970s that promised to "deinstitutionalize" mental health patients who sometimes spent their entire lives hospitalized, but the needed treatment and support dollars never followed these patients back to the community.

The Wayne County juvenile justice system owes it to the children, youth and families of Wayne County to provide more direction and a clearer vision for what the system is and what it is attempting to accomplish.

Poor vision, direction and lack of stable funding have led to a situation today where youth are underserved and their basic supervision in the community may be questioned.

No system should take pride in being efficient simply because it spends fewer dollars -- the issue is whether or not those who are to be served are receiving the services they need in the most effective and efficient manner.

Children and youth who have experienced a lifetime of abuse, hopelessness and despair are not going to change overnight whether we wish for it or not, whether we can afford it or not. Community safety and helping our children, youth and families reclaim their lives is not an option, it is our responsibility.

In terms of the allegations that those in the system and/or county officials themselves are somehow involved in taking advantage of scarce dollars, this must be addressed quickly and disproved or resolved so the citizens of Wayne County can be assured that whatever dollars are spent are directly going to the care of these children and youth and not into the pockets of others.

Lyn Lewis, Board President

Holy Cross Children's Services, Clinton Township

Appeals court ruling will affect restitution in Howell arson case

Lower court told to base amount on loss, not replacement value

BY TOM TOLEN
News Staff Reporter

A \$715,581 restitution bill owed by the parents of a teen who set fire to the Howell High School library in 2003 could be lowered under a Michigan Court of Appeals ruling.

The appellate court, in a ruling issued Tuesday, said the Livingston County Probate Court erred last year in setting the amount of restitution to be paid to SET-SEG, the district's insur-

ance company.

In sending the case back, Judges Janet Neff, Donald S. Owens and Mark J. Cavanagh said the restitution should have been based on the school district's actual loss, rather than on the replacement value of the damaged property.

The appeals court did affirm the lower court decision in part, saying its imposition of restitution did not violate the parents' constitutional right to due process.

In November 2003, Livingston County Judge Susan Reck ruled that the parents are legally responsible for their son's actions and must pay the full amount of

restitution to the insurer. In February 2004, Reck amended her ruling, determining that the parents would not be held personally responsible for repayment, instead ruling that State Farm Fire and Casualty, their insurer, would have to pay.

The News has not released the teen's name because he was a juvenile at the time of the offense.

While conceding the ruling might mean less restitution for the parents' insurer to pay, SET-SEG attorney Christopher Matthyse said he was satisfied with the ruling. "The law has

SEE ARSON, B3

ARSON FROM B1

Court ruling could lead to lower restitution

been upheld; we just have to determine (the restitution) in a different way," said the Grand Rapids-based Matthyse.

The youth, who was 15 at the time of the incident, pleaded guilty in July 2003 to three counts of arson, breaking and entering and malicious destruction of property. He was given a

blended sentence, pleading guilty as an adult but being sentenced as a juvenile.

Now 18, the youth served two years at the Arbor Heights Center juvenile home in Ann Arbor, and is now living in Ypsilanti. He remains under the juvenile court's jurisdiction until he reaches the age of 19 in Septem-

ber but is living independently, said his attorney, Ron Plunkett of Brighton.

Neither the teen's parents nor their attorney could be reached for comment.

Tom Tolen can be reached at ttolen@livingstoncommunitynews.com or at (810) 844-2009.

Stabbing victim says husband left her 'like a deer carcass'

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

By Lisa Medendorp
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Amy Lathrop wants people to know she's "doing pretty well," despite being stabbed at least 11 times Sunday at her Egelston Township home.

"I'm getting better," she said, adding she should soon be out of the hospital.

Meanwhile, her husband, William Lee Lathrop, 39, has been charged with assault with intent to murder. Judge Michael J. Nolan denied bail at Monday's 60th District Court arraignment.

Muskegon County Sheriff's deputies were called to 1088 Parkway about 5:30 p.m., and found the 36-year-old woman bleeding from numerous wounds inflicted by a steak knife.

She was taken to Mercy General Health Partners Sherman Campus and initially was listed in critical condition, according to the sheriff's department.

She said she was stabbed in the chest and arms, and her lungs collapsed. "He hit six vital areas," she said. "He knew what he was doing."

William Lathrop fled the scene, but the investigation led to a cabin on Minke Road in Oceana County where he was arrested about 4 1/2 hours later.

"He thought I was dead," said Amy Lathrop. "He left me behind for dead, just like a deer carcass."

She said this morning that if it hadn't been for her 16-year-old daughter, she would have been dead. Her 12-year-old daughter also ran across the street to her grandparents' home for help.

Her teenage daughter "was right in the middle of the whole thing, punching, kicking and biting to get him off of me," Lathrop said. "I'm surprised she didn't get hurt. She's a hero."

Amy Lathrop said that after enduring years of physical abuse, she finally decided to leave her husband of 18 years for good. "The last couple of months have been really bad," she said. "We'd been fighting every night."

"When you're making that decision (to leave), you know your husband is potentially dangerous. Us being married so long, I was too afraid to leave before. I knew when I did this it would be potentially hazardous to me and my children."

The couple's four children are staying with a relative. "They're doing OK," she said. "It's hard on them, losing their father (through arrest) and they thought they lost me."

Amy Lathrop moved out of the house several days before the assault and returned Sunday to see how her children were doing and to take them to the beach.

William Lathrop showed up. "He was mad because I was leaving him," she said. She told him she was not coming home because the way they were living "was not good for us or the kids."

He wouldn't calm down, she said, and "the kids scattered when they heard us yelling."

She said they were in the yard by a truck, when her husband grabbed her and started punching her. "He was beating me like I was another man," she said.

She said he dragged her in the house and continued the assault. Police said her husband grabbed a steak knife from the dining room table and stabbed her.

Preliminary examination has been set for July 7. If convicted, William Lathrop could face any term of years in prison, up to life.

Police: Local Family Beaten In Dispute Over Car

Father Taken Into Custody

POSTED: 7:48 am EDT June 28, 2005

UPDATED: 7:21 pm EDT June 28, 2005

A Dearborn man was taken into custody after police said he beat his wife and teenage daughters with a crowbar early Tuesday. The incident occurred at a home in the 8700 block of Shaddick Street during an argument over the family van, Local 4 reported.

Police said when the man's wife refused to give him the keys to the vehicle, he picked up a crowbar and started hitting her with it. The man then turned the weapon on his 14-year-old daughter, Yesmeen, and his 16-year-old daughter, Sanah, when they attempted to break up the fight, police said.

Officers who arrived at the scene found the three female victims bludgeoned inside the home, according to the station's reports. The victims were transported to Henry Ford Hospital for treatment, according to police. The woman was listed in critical condition. Yesmeen was in fair condition and Sanah's condition was stabilized and she was transferred to Children's Hospital, the station reported.

The names of the man and his wife were not yet released. Two other children were not harmed in the attack, Local 4 learned.

Local 4 initially reported the victims were stabbed, but police confirmed they were beaten.

Yesmeen and Sanah are students at Fordson High School in Dearborn. Principal Oussama Baydoun said the teens appeared to have a normal home life.

"There was never any signs for us," Baydoun said. "I always saw two, well adjusted, very popular young ladies."

Neighbors told Local 4 that they often heard the couple arguing, but never thought it would lead to violence.

"I just was woken up to the sound of sirens and them carrying people out of the house on stretchers," said Mary Cyr, Dearborn resident.

The man accused in the beating could be charged sometime this week

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Making the best of it

19-YEAR-OLD'S FOUR-YEAR JOURNEY ALONE IS PRETTY AMAZING

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, June 26, 2005

By Rose Mary Reizreiz@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6353

She grew up in a violent, alcoholic home.

Both her parents spent time in jail. She was on her own at 15, then shuttled to the homes of relatives and foster families.

Jazmon Kinney's life should be a mess. Instead, she became an expert at what she calls "making the best of it," even when she didn't have much to work with.

Jazmon, 19, this month graduated with honors, including the Outstanding Senior award from Bendle High School. She maintained high grades while she held down a job, played flute in the band, served on the student council, belonged to science and drama clubs, tutored struggling students, did volunteer work and served as vice president of the Genesee County Youth Corp's youth advisory board.

In a few months, she will enter college, where she hopes to major in social work.

"I think I could help kids who are going through some of the things I've been through," she said. "I guess I'm kind of an example."

No kidding.

Jazmon, a fragile-looking brunette with soft brown eyes and a core of steel, learned early to fend for herself.

"I can see now that my mom and dad weren't ready to be parents," said Jazmon, who was raised near West Branch. "They both had a lot of issues, but instead of dealing with them, they took them out on each other."

Jazmon's parents never married but spent 17 turbulent years together. Jazmon and her younger brother, John, grew up to the soundtrack of screaming, slapping and door slamming.

"When I was little, I tried to be the referee," Jazmon said. "I remember always yelling at them to stop fighting. My dad had a sword collection, and I'd take the swords and hide them so no one would get hurt."

Jazmon's capped teeth are a souvenir of her father's temper. The state got wind of the abuse and placed the children with their grandmother while their mother and father took parenting classes. They completed the classes, and the children were returned.

When Jazmon was 14, her parents split up. Jazmon was on the outs with her mother and chose to live with her dad. By then, she was an angry, rebellious teen. One night, she was furious with being left alone while her father was out with his girlfriend. She got drunk on wine coolers and shattered a glass cabinet.

Suddenly afraid of what she'd done, Jazmon called her mom, who came to the house. When Jazmon's dad returned, her parents got into an argument that ended with Jazmon's mother knocking her father unconscious with a wine bottle. Jazmon got a cut lip from getting between them.

Her mom was arrested and taken to jail. Jazmon's relationship with her father continued to deteriorate. At 15, she moved out, rented a room at a friend's house and got a job working in her uncle's video store.

Her independence didn't last. When the state learned she was living on her own, she was put in a foster care home.

Jazmon described her foster mother as a well-meaning but overwhelmed woman with too much on her plate. She didn't have time to get to know a troubled teen, and Jazmon spent most of her days watching the woman's younger children. Jazmon was depressed, underweight and as stressed out as her host.

Jazmon kept tenuous contact with her biological mother, who moved to the Upper Peninsula after her release from jail. She had no contact with her father, who also spent time in jail as the result of her reported abuse. She was as close as ever to her brother, who had been placed with a loving foster family in Bay City.

At 17, Jazmon's physical wounds had healed. But still-raw emotional damage made her an angry force to be reckoned with. "I hated everyone and wouldn't talk to anybody," she said. "My dad's side of the family disowned me for speaking up about the abuse. I was shut down, and there was no one to talk to."

Enter Glenn Addis, a social worker and child welfare specialist for the state Department of Human Services in West Branch. Addis met with Jazmon and saw potential beneath the teen's angry exterior.

"Jazmon gave me a real run for my money," Addis said. "She blustered and vented and blew up at me. But she also listened, which a lot of kids don't do."

Children from abusive homes blame themselves for the abuse, Addis said. If they can't be convinced that they weren't at fault, they become candidates for shattered lives or suicide.

Jazmon was fortunate. With the help of Addis and psychologist Shelli Reiss of Bay Psychological Services in Bay City, she began the hard work of healing.

After a short, unhappy stay with an aunt who lived in the Flint area, Jazmon moved to Traverse Place, a transitional program in downtown Flint for homeless young people. There, in a rambling old house with a tough-love staff and other kids with problem pasts, Jazmon felt she'd finally come home.

"The people here accept me for who I am - and they jump down my throat when I need it," she said. "This will always be home to me."

At Bendle High School, Jazmon used music and drama as a way to release pent-up emotions. She found another guardian angel in drama teacher Jeana Rossie-Miller, who first gave Jazmon a jacket to wear during her bus ride to school, then gave her rides to and from school each day.

Jazmon found friends to laugh and be silly with - something new for her.

"Growing up, I was too busy taking care of my brother and my parents to be a kid," she said. "Now, it's like there are two parts of me: the funny, silly side and the serious, hardworking side."

When in serious mode, she carries a bulging, battered planner to keep track of a hectic schedule, which includes graduation activities, Youth Corp board meetings and a job as a Rite Aid cashier. Earning \$6.70 an hour, she has saved enough for a down payment on a car.

Oh yes, she's also got a boyfriend. Jonathan Pickett is stationed with the U.S. Army in Germany. His parents, who live in West Branch, have invited Jazmon to live with them this summer.

But marriage is "a long way off," Jazmon said. First, she will focus on four years at Saginaw Valley State University (\$4,000 in scholarships will help defray expenses) and a career.

"I know I want to help people," she said. "And I know I want my situation to be better than my parents.' "

Jazmon's mother lives in the Upper Peninsula; her father, in Traverse City. Her brother lives in Bay City with the foster family that plans to adopt him. Her parents came to her high school graduation ceremony. She said her father cried when she called to invite him.

"He apologized for the things he's done, and he said he wants the chance to make things up to me," Jazmon said. "I forgive my mom for a lot of things she did because I understand why it happened. My dad apologizing to me is a start. But I want to take things slow."

Unlike many people her age, Jazmon is grateful for what she has. She knows that life isn't fair, and that no one owes her anything.

"One of the amazing things about Jazmon is how often she says 'Thank you,' " said social worker Addis. "She says it when you do anything for her. She's grounded, unassuming and willing to work very hard."

"You know that old adage, 'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger'? That's Jazmon. I can't wait to see what the next chapters in her life will bring."

The big moment: Jazmon stands in a row of classmates in Bendle's gymnasium before going up to receive her high school diploma.

Jazmon and social worker Glenn Addis leave the IMA Brookwood Golf Course after an awards dinner for the Consortium on Child Abuse where Jazmon was invited to speak. Addis is one of Jazmon's champions and biggest fans. "Jazmon tells me I've been like a dad to her," Addis said. "I'm honored. She's a great kid."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

Kalamazoo Gazette

Single moms make many sacrifices

Your recent article about the "Cost of replacing mom," was most entertaining. I enjoyed your description of today's modern Mom -- "Faster than the mouth on a feisty teenager. Stronger than a struggling toddler. Able to handle three home-cooked meals, four loads of laundry, five tantrums and six rides to-and-from ball practice in a single day. She's today's mom and, since she typically earns nothing for her at-home efforts except hugs and kisses, she's arguably the most underpaid worker in American society today."

I just have one extra addendum to that.

Not only is there the above moms' vital worth to their families, but think of the mom who does all that AND has a full-time job! And most of all, let us think about the mom who does all that, plus has a full time job, PLUS she's a single mom. She needs our encouragement the most.

Let us remember these moms, who sacrifice so much for their families without the help or assistance of another adult. They should also be highly commended for their courage and determination.

I don't bring this up to diminish the good that other mothers (with partners) bring to their families, I just wanted to give those single moms a little boost. They work so hard, and sacrifice so much. May God bless all women for the loving ways they care for their families.

Kathleen Martin
Editorial assistant
Kalamazoo Gazette

Foster Grandparents celebrate 28th anniversary

Escanaba Daily Press
June 29, 2005

ESCANABA - Sixty Foster Grandparents from Delta, Menominee and Schoolcraft counties recently celebrated 27 years of service in their communities. A dinner in their honor was held at the Terrace Bay Inn.

The special guests were the foster grandparents who work with children with special and exceptional needs and one-on-one in an intergenerational setting. They do a multitude of things from tutoring to story reading to helping with special projects.

The evening activities were overseen by the Policy Advisory Council members from all three counties. Diane Casperson, wife of Representative Tom Casperson, as well as school personnel, volunteer station staff, and program supporters, were guests who joined the event. Also, a letter of congratulations for 27 years of service was received from the White House and Senator Carl Levin's office.

Evening highlights featured the traditional birthday cupcakes representing dedication and willingness to serve and "Happy Birthday" was sung.

Cindy Brock, vice president of the Upper Peninsula Foster Grandparent Foundation, presented awards for recognition of the foundation fund-raiser participants, Foster Grandparent Foundation Royalty and top four prize winners.

William Dubord, executive director of Menominee/Delta/Schoolcraft Community Action Agency gave the welcoming address and Lois Pinar of the Delta County Policy Advisory Council served as the Mistress of Ceremonies.

The fund-raising sub-committee bingo workers were also honored for their dedication and support. The fund-raising sub-committee bingo workers include Matt Ashby, Julie Baribeau, Dan and Donelle Bourdeau, Sharon Reisner, Beth Seguin and Steve Stein.

The Upper Peninsula Foster Grandparent Foundation's annual award was presented to Mary Bunnin, program director, and Angel Waeghe, program supervisor, in the amount of \$9,000.

This award helps to enable funding for another Foster Grandparent in each of the three counties.

Robert Benish and John Gauthier, Charitable Committee members from Manistique Papers, Inc., presented Director Mary Bunnin and Supervisor Angel Waeghe \$3,014 to the program to fund an additional Foster Grandparent in Schoolcraft County.

Plaques of appreciation were presented for valuable contributions and support of the Foster Grandparent Program to the Upper Peninsula Foster Grandparent Foundation, Manistique Papers, Inc., and Younkers of Marinette, Wis.

Foster Grandparents honored were:

Twenty-Seven Years - Irene Johnsen.

Twenty-Six Years - Margaret Shampo.

Twenty-Five Years - Ethel Victorson.

Twenty-Two Years - Virginia Grenier.

Twenty Years - Phyllis Hooker.

Nineteen Years - Mae Lawrence.

Thirteen Years - Violet Bartels and Doris Hansen.

Eleven Years - Berta Maki, Helen Kossel, Marjorie Winling and (Intermediate Kathleen Scoon).

Ten Years - Dorothy Scheeneman, Elsie Ries and Wima Nelson.

Nine Years - Irene Bezine.

Eight Years - Rovena Murphy, Grace Seidl, Charlene Groll, Mary Peterson, Loretta Skrobiak and Rose Moulds.

Seven Years - Ann Mikuska and Wanda Gould.

Six Years - Shirley Macabee.

Five Years - Mary Ellen Kane, Joan Lambert, Dolores Stewart (Patricia Kniskern, Sally Paradise intermediate).

Three Years - June Anderson, Marian Gollakner, Harriet Plutchak, Karen Roubal, Leon Gonyea, Josephine Lucas, Patricia Szczygiel and Ida Malmstead.

Two Years - Mary Lou Marx, Gloria Evans and JoAnn Klodt. Four Years - Helen Creten, Otilie Dimock, Ann Revis, Marlene Nocerini, Jeanne Larson, Carol Porter and Ruth Helwig.

One Year - Marie LaDuron, Donna Tourangeau and Margaret Bresaw.

Intermediate Category (less than 675 hours) - Christine Bresaw, Barbara LeClaire, Judy Maschino, Cora Mercier, Alan Larson, Leila Thill, Eldin Mercier, Lorraine Wendland and Mary Anne Javurek.

The Foster Grandparent program, one of the most successful and respected senior volunteer efforts in the United States, enriches all who serve as well as its beneficiaries.

The Foster Grandparent program is funded by Michigan Office of Services to the Aging and Corporation for National Service, administered by Community Action Agency, Human Resources Authority, Inc., 507 First Avenue North, Escanaba, and has continuous recruitment.

To sign up or for more information, contact Director Mary Bunnin or Supervisor Angel Waeghe at (906) 786-7080.

COLUMNIST

Battle Creek Enquirer

Tips can help you to avoid falls

Dr. Zihni Yilmaz

June is National Patient Safety Month. Due to the significant increase in our senior population over the past 20 years, the health care industry has seen a rise in the number of falls among this population. This is cause for concern not only for the health of the person but the substantial costs that are incurred. Consequently, a major focus has been directed to developing programs to aid in fall prevention.

Falls are a serious public health problem among older adults. In the United States, one of every three people over age 65 falls each year and two-thirds of those who fall do so again within six months. Among people age 65 and older, falls are a leading cause of serious injury, some of which lead to death. Approximately 300,000 older adults suffer fall-related hip fractures each year. In 1994, estimated cost of fall-related injuries was \$20.2 billion. By 2020, it is estimated to reach \$32.4 billion.

In many cases, a fall can be precipitated by use of medications, such as sedatives, muscle relaxants and blood pressure drugs, diuretics or water pills that cause dizziness, lightheadedness or loss of balance. When two or more medications are used in combination, the side effects may be exacerbated. Diseases associated with frequent falls include Parkinson's disease, spinal canal narrowing (spinal stenosis), diabetes, heart block, macular degeneration, diseases that affect the inner ear, Alzheimer's disease, etc. Falls also result from diminished vision, hearing, muscle strength, coordination and from diseases that affect balance.

RISK OF UNDIAGNOSED OSTEOPOROSIS

There is often a link between the broken bone and osteoporosis. Because osteoporosis progresses without symptoms, falls are especially dangerous for people unaware that they have low bone density. Ninety percent of hip fractures are associated with osteoporosis.

TIPS TO HELP PREVENT FALLS

1. Begin a regular exercise program.
2. Make your home safer.
3. Have your health care provider review your medicines.
4. Have your vision checked.

People of any age can improve their environment in ways that reduce their risk of falling and breaking a bone.

SAFETY TIPS

In harsh weather, stay inside if you can, otherwise use a walker or cane for added stability. In winter, wear warm boots with rubber soles for added traction. Identify community services that can provide delivery assistance. Stop at curbs and check height before stepping up or down. Be aware of uneven surfaces when you are doing yard work. Be alert to the location of hoses to prevent tripping. Keep all rooms free from clutter, especially floors. Keep floor surfaces smooth, but not slippery. When entering the house, be aware of the difference in the height of thresholds.

Wear supportive, low-heeled shoes even at home. Avoid walking around in socks, stockings or floppy slippers. Remove all loose wires, cords and throw rugs. Consider purchasing a portable telephone to take from room to room. Make sure halls, stairways and entrances are well lit. In the home, it is recommended that you use at least 100-watt bulbs. Install a night light in your bathroom. Have a light close to your bed, where it can be turned on during the night. Another option is to install a voice- or sound-activated lamp.

Arrange daily contact with a family member or friend.

EXERCISE PROGRAM

An exercise program for high risk patients should be designed and instructed by the physical therapist and occupational therapist. Speech pathologists also can be helpful by assessing the individual's cognitive functional status. Once deficits are identified, the speech pathologist will assist by instructing on strategies to cope with problem areas. Individuals over the age of 65, without any identified risk factors, should participate in regular muscle strengthening exercises.

It is recommended that older adults be assessed for osteoporosis by their physician and be treated accordingly.

Dr. Zihni Yilmaz is medical director at the Southwest Regional Rehabilitation Center.

Originally published June 29, 2005

FOC panel survives; what is its mission?

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

The Friend of the Court Advisory Committee won a new lease on life last week -- by the slimmest of margins. The Jackson County Board of Commissioners, in a 6-5 vote, opted not to dissolve the nine-member FOC panel. Thus, it was hardly a mandate for the group; it was, rather, a near-death experience.

In recent weeks, the group has heard various people describe it as a useless committee in quest of a purpose. When a controversy arose over the proposed appointment of a Friend of the Court critic, it became clear the group doesn't meet very often and that it is little more than a sounding board.

Its chairman, attorney Eric White, told commissioners he would never have agreed to serve had he known how powerless the group is. It only raises false hopes, he said. With his own appointment having lapsed, White supported the panel's elimination.

Despite all of that, we find it curious -- even encouraging -- that there was significant interest in the appointment of a general-public representative to the panel. Six candidates initially vied for the same appointment. Leoni Township Trustee Shirley Johnson, who won the appointment, told commissioners that if the panel were eliminated, she feared children would be pushed aside by the system. "If we do away with the board," she added, "where will people go when they have a complaint?"

What does that suggest? Simply this -- at least some people who serve on the panel take seriously their role, even if others do not. And though the group has no authority to make any changes, it has some power as long as it has the authority to take complaints. And though the Legislature last year made advisory committees optional, Jackson County's committee continues to have authority until the day county commissioners vote to abolish it.

Since this issue only surfaced as a public concern in the course of making an appointment to the advisory panel, it makes good sense to continue the panel -- at least for the time being. But members of the group should re-evaluate their role. And since there are two unfilled vacancies on the panel (for one attorney and one mental-health professional), an effort should be made to recruit candidates.

The Friend of the Court touches thousands of lives in Jackson County -- often in ways that leave people feeling frustrated and angry. Granted, the advisory panel has no direct power to effect change. It does, however, have the power to hear complaints, record them, to address grievances of those who deal with Friend of the Court, to recommend policy changes. It also is supposed to produce an annual report.

There is plenty of inherent authority in that much -- if members of the panel conduct themselves as those who have been charged with a mission. And if, as should be the case, Friend of the Court officials take seriously the input from this advisory group.

--The Jackson Citizen Patriot

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EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT UP IN MOST REGIONS

Total employment increased in 11 of the state's 17 labor markets in May, but unemployment was up in all 17 of those markets, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth announced Wednesday. But since May 2004, the department said 16 of the regions saw higher employment and 11 saw lower unemployment.

Officials said much of the change from April came from those seeking seasonal work, noting that the Upper Peninsula and Northeast and Northwest regions of the state, heavily dependant on tourism, all saw unemployment rates fall. Conversely, the Lansing-East Lansing region saw unemployment up because seasonal drops in education employment were added to auto industry layoffs.

"This time of year, many individuals enter Michigan's labor market in search of seasonal and summer employment," said Richard Waclawek, director of the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "This labor force influx typically produces in May an increase in the number of persons finding and seeking jobs."

The Ann Arbor region held its place with the lowest unemployment rate, 4.7 percent, but that was still up from 4.1 percent in April and 4.6 percent in May 2004. The region saw its labor force drop to 192,000 from 194,100 in April but increase from 186,900 in May 2004. Employment followed the same trend down to 183,000 in May from 186,200 in April but up from 178,400 in May 2004.

Flint and Saginaw tied with the highest unemployment at 8.2 percent. The two regions also followed closely in unemployment trends, with Flint having 7.6 percent unemployment in April and 8.3 percent in May 2004, while for Saginaw the rates were 7.7 percent and 8.8 percent respectively.

Northwest Lower Michigan saw the most people come into the workforce in May, with its workforce up 3.6 percent from April to 162,800, while employment in the region was up only 4.1 percent to 152,000. Northeast Lower Michigan topped that employment growth with a 5.1 percent increase to 95,100, while its workforce growth was only slightly slower at 3.5 percent to 103,200.

Only Ann Arbor and Lansing-East Lansing saw workforce declines, the former down 1.1 percent and the latter down .9 percent to 245,900. But Lansing topped the employment declines at 2.1 percent, falling to 238,900 people.

Northeast Lower Michigan saw the most significant increases in workforce and employment for the year, with the total workforce up 3.2 percent from May 2004 to 103,200, while employment was up 3.7 percent to 95,100. Detroit-Warren-Livonia was the only region to see employment drop for the year, down .5 percent to 2.035 million from a workforce that held steady for the year at 2.192 million.

TOM WALSH: MEDC ousts CEO Jakeway

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BY TOM WALSH

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

After less than two years on the job, Don Jakeway is being removed as president and CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corp., the agency charged with attracting and keeping businesses and jobs in our state.

He will be replaced Sept. 1 by James Epolito, who resigned in May as president and CEO of the Lansing-based Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America. Formal announcement of the changes is planned for today. The MEDC executive committee expects to ratify Epolito's contract soon. Neither Jakeway nor Epolito could be reached for comment late Tuesday.

There have been rumblings for months in Lansing that Jakeway might be removed from the top MEDC post, but the reasons are murky. Ever since Gov. Jennifer Granholm took office in January 2003, there has been some confusion about which agency, the MEDC or the newly formed Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, headed by David Hollister, is the state's primary voice on business and job creation.

State's economic woes continue

Michigan's economy has been among the nation's worst performers in recent years, although no one is blaming that on Jakeway.

Epolito headed the Accident Fund since December 1994, when it was purchased from the State of Michigan by Blue Cross Blue Shield for \$262 million in one of the nation's largest privatizations of a state agency. In the next decade, he grew it into one of the largest workers compensation organizations in the country.

He was one of several contenders to succeed longtime Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan CEO Dick Whitmer when Whitmer retires next year but lost that contest when Daniel Loepp was named in March as Whitmer's successor. Epolito, a 1978 Michigan State University graduate, has spent virtually his entire career with Blue Cross.

Jakeway, who headed the Ohio Department of Development for seven years in the 1990s, will remain with the MEDC for the immediate future. He will focus on international trade and investment efforts and two big near-term events: the Forbes magazine CEO conference on Mackinac Island in September and the Super Bowl in February.

Both executives have skills

Insiders in state economic development circles see Epolito as an executive with lots of hands-on experience running a business as well as navigating the politics of Lansing, while Jakeway was perceived as more of a traditional back-slapping economic development veteran and promoter. Neither is bad at what he does, according to the Lansing grapevine. Think of it like the Detroit Pistons basketball team replacing former coach Rick Carlisle with Larry Brown. That didn't mean Carlisle was a bad coach. Indeed, he has done wonders with the Indiana Pacers the last two years. But Brown was a perfect fit for a team on the cusp of greatness.

Michigan's economy, conversely, is nowhere near great right now. Epolito's job is to get on the same page, quickly, with Granholm and Hollister and try to help mount a worst-to-first-type comeback.

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